

THE EVOLUTION OF BOARDS

This tool is designed to help Board members become aware of different levels of Board member behavior and effectiveness. At the “Fiduciary” level, Board members review reports, highlight successes, and identify problems. At the Tactical level, Board members tackle short-term issues and engage in problem solving. At the Strategic level, Board members weigh different value propositions, engage in robust debate, and set the long-term goals of the organization.

	Fiduciary	Tactical	Strategic
Board’s primary role	Sentinel	Contributor	Sense maker
Board provides	Oversight	Foresight	Insight
Board’s core work	Technical	Analytical	Reconcile value propositions
CEO-Board relationship	Hub and spoke	Partners, collaborators	Think-tank peers
Key question	What’s wrong?	What’s the plan?	What’s the key question?
Problems are to be	Spotted	Solved	Framed
Strategy	Set by CEO, ratified by Board	Board and CEO plan together	Board and CEO think together

	Fiduciary	Tactical	Strategic
Performance metrics	Facts, figures, finances, reports	Output indicators, benchmarks	Outcomes, results, signs of learning and discerning
Agendas and meetings	Staff-dominated, standardized	Tactically-driven, participative	Strategically driven, collective mind of Board doing work
Deliberative style	Parliamentary and orderly	Empirical and logical	Robust and sometimes playful
Group norm	Deference	Consensus	Robust discourse, unity of control ¹
Group dynamic	Great minds think alike	Reasonable people disagree agreeably	Great minds think differently
Ways of knowing	It stands to reason; listen to the CEO	Look at the data, do the pieces fit?	Potential outcomes, leverage points
Board education	Little or none	Episodic; strategic	Continuous

LRI's expert consultants can help your organization improve its governance and decision-making practices. Please call us for a free consultation at 800-598-7662 or email info@leadingresources.com.

¹ Unity of Control is the principle that a Board directs the executive, not individual Board members. In practice, it means that no instruction from a Board member is binding on the executive or an employee until the Board votes to approve it. When practiced effectively, it also means the executive should alert the Board when an individual Board member – either intentionally or unintentionally – violates the Unity of Control.